

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 ICAE-00

INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 HA-05 IO-13 AID-05

PC-01 /084 W

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FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 079

INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY

AMCONSUL LUBUMBASHI PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 5545

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, PINS, CG, FR, BE

SUBJECT: SHABA: STATUS OF FRENCH AND BELGIAN FORCES

REF: CUTLER/SWING TELECON, MAY 29

1. AS OF MAY 30 MOST OF FRENCH FORCES REMAIN IN LUBUMBASHI WITH SOME STILL AT KOLWEZI, WHILE DETACHMENTS OF BELGIAN TROOPS ARE SCATTERED ABOUT MAIN SHABA MINING TOWNS WHERE EXPATRIATES ARE CONCENTRATED. IT IS EVIDENT THAT ONLY THE PRESENCE OF THESE TROOPS HAS AVERTED A DEMAND FOR IMMEDIATE EVACUATION BY MOST EXPATRIATES LEFT IN SHABA. SUCH A MASS EXODUS WOULD OF COURSE COMPLETE THE DESTRUCTION TO SHABA'S MINERALS INDUSTRY ALREADY CAUSED BY THE CLOSING DOWN OF KOLWEZI; IT COULD ALSO TRIGGER PANIC AND SIMILAR DEPARTURES AMONG EXPATRIATES IN OTHER PARTS OF ZAIRE.

2. BOTH BELGIAN AMBASSADOR RITTWEGER DE MOOR AND FRENCH AMBASSADOR ROSS ARE NEVERTHELESS WORRIED THAT THEIR GOVERNMENTS, FOR EASONS RELATING TO DOMESTIC POLITICAL PRESSURE, MAY YET DECIDE TO PULL THEIR TROOPS OUT PRECIPITANTLY. RITTWEGER DE MOOR, JUST BACK FROM CONSULTATIONS WITH BELGIAN COMMUNITY LEADERS IN SHABA, HAS
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STRONGLY URGED BRUSSELS TO LEAVE THE TROOPS IN PLACE UNTIL SOME CREDIBLE ALTERNATIVE MILITARY FORCE CAN BE CREATED TO TAKE THEIR PLACE. WITHOUT SUCH AN ALTERNATIVE -- WHICH EXCLUDES FAZ -- HE IS CONVINCED ALMOST EVERY BELGIAN WOULD INSIST ON LEAVING THE MOMENT BELGIAN TROOPS ARE WITHDRAWN.

3. FRENCH AMBASSADOR ROSS AGREES FULLY AND HAS SIMILARLY

RECOMMENDED THAT FRENCH TROOPS BE RETAINED IN SHABA UNTIL AT LEAST JUNE 15. ROSS RETURNED FROM CONSULTATIONS IN PARIS DEEPLY IMPRESSED BY THE EXTENT OF OPPOSITION TO FRANCE'S MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN ZAIRE, BOTH AMONG THE PUBLIC AND WITHIN THE GOF. HE BELIEVES A DECISION TO PULL OUT BELGIAN FORCES WOULD IMMEDIATELY INDUCE A SIMILAR DECISION BY HIS GOVERNMENT.

4. MEANWHILE, THE GOZ HAS APPARENTLY AGREED TO ALLOW EXPATRIATE WOMEN AND CHILDREN TO "LEAVE ON SUMMER VACATION EARLY". SINCE ALL REGULAR COMMERCIAL FLIGHTS ARE FULLY BOOKED THROUGH MID-JULY, THE BELGIANS ARE SEEKING TO ARRANGE SPECIAL CHARTERS. RITTWEGER DE MOOR HAS RECOMMENDED AGAINST THE GOB'S ORIGINAL IDEA OF USING MILITARY AIRCRAFT ON THE GROUNDS THIS WOULD BE INTERPRETED AS AN EMERGENCY EVACUATION AND THEREBY TRIGGER THE PANIC AND LARGER EXODUS HE IS SEEKING TO DISCOURAGE.

5. OBVIOUSLY, THE SAFETY OF EXPATRIATES IS OF FIRST CONCERN. HOWEVER, I SHARE MY COLLEAGUES' CONCERN ABOUT THE NEGATIVE AND PERHAPS FATAL EFFECTS ON ZAIRE'S CHANCES OF SURVIVAL IF ALL FOREIGNERS SUDDENLY FLEE THE COUNTRY. I THEREFORE REITERATE THE RECOMMENDATION MADE REF TELECON: THAT WE (A) FACILITATE TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE THE FORMATION AND QUICKEST POSSIBLE DEPLOYMENT TO SHABA OF A VIABLE INTRA-AFRICAN FORCE, AND (B) PENDING SUCH DEPLOYMENT, ENCOURAGE THE BELGIANS AND FRENCH TO RETAIN THEIR TROOPS IN SHABA, AND PROVIDE THEM WITH LIMITED LOGISTICAL SUPPORT IF NEEDED.
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